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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

UNACCEPTABLE INCIDENT OF MOB LYNCHING OF ACCUSED MAN HELD IN CENTRAL JAIL DIMAPUR

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CHRI condemns the mob attack that ended in the lynching of Mr. Syed Farid Khan who was being held in judicial custody in Dimapur Jail. Jails have been intended as a place of 'safe custody' but State authorities have failed to protect him as is required by law. Reports indicate that jail staff were overpowered and that the mob then paraded its victim naked for some eight kilometres before beating him to death.

Whatever the makeup of the mob, a Central Jail should have been equipped with adequate security staff outside its walls, with sufficient alertness to call for amplification of police forces, and enough prison guards inside to prevent an inmate from being dragged out. Unfortunately, most jails in India including Dimapur Central Jail, fail to meet the norm of 1:3 for ratio of inmate to prison staff. The police had a duty to intervene with reasonable and proportionate force if necessary to prevent the murder that took place in broad daylight. However, not even a single barricade was put up nor a dispersing technique used to prevent the mob from carrying out its heinous act. This reveals the total negligence of the district administration and the police to safeguard rule of law.

While an inquiry into the incident has been undertaken and twenty-two persons who formed part of the mob have been reportedly arrested so far, further findings of the inquiry should be made public and brought to an early and just conclusion. As much of the incident was videographed, all perpetrators must be properly identified and brought to justice. Strong administrative action such as the suspension of Deputy Commissioner and Superintendent of Police, along with four other officials is a commendable effort to strike home the gravity of such lapses.

Mob violence of the kind that takes the law into its own hands is entirely unjustifiable. It violates all principles of natural justice wherein a person is deemed innocent till he is proven guilty by a court. This is one more of several incidents that draw attention to the poor conditions of jails across the country, the shortfalls in manpower and training in the prison and police services and their lack of preparedness and response. CHRI once again calls for root and branch reform of both the police and prison services. In its absence these incidents will repeat themselves again and again.